

GAZEBO EXPRESS

YOUR COMMUNITY NEWS AND EVENT SOURCE FOR THE TOWN OF HIGHLAND • APRIL 2020

LETTER FROM OUR TOWN COUNCIL PRESIDENT

HIGHLAND IS COMMITTED TO KEEPING YOU SAFE DURING THIS EXTRAORDINARY HEALTH CRISIS

Thank you, Highland, for taking the pandemic seriously and the changes it has caused in your lives in stride.

I want to take this opportunity to update you on our plans going forward while thanking our department heads for anticipating issues, creating solutions before we have issues.

From police, VIPS and fire to public works, redevelopment, and parks, our departments are led by seasoned professionals who have dedicated their careers in service to our town.

A special kudos to our first responders who risk their health to keep us safe.

This April Gazebo Express and our website – highland.in.gov – are designed to provide the latest updates on this crisis.

I expect our public buildings will be closed to residents through most, if not all, of April.

The governor's directive to shelter-in-place takes us through at least April 7. His plan – and ours – will be to evaluate where we are in April to determine next steps.

We are taking every step possible to minimize the impact job losses and business closures have taken.

There will be no water shutoffs or late fees for at least 60 days.

In these days where nearly everything is unexpected, there is one thing that hasn't surprised me at all – and that is the spirit of Highland.

Neighbors are watching out for each other. Friends are dropping provisions at the doorsteps of those who need them most. It's that sense of pride we take care of our own and that we weather our storms – together.

If you are looking for something to do while at home (taking the census or park survey) or in need of assistance (paying rent or buying food), please turn the page for inspiration.

We've got you covered. Be safe. Be well.



MARK SCHOCKE
Town Council President

CORONAVIRUS SPECIAL REPORT

[PUBLIC ACCESS]

Highland has limited access to town buildings.

- Public participation in all meetings is curtailed.
- Town Hall business may be conducted by phone at (219) 838-1080.
- There is no public access to the police or fire stations.
- The town garage is closed on Saturdays for dumping large items.

[RESTAURANTS]

If you are a restaurant doing business during the pandemic, we want to hear from you. Email webupdates@theideafactory.us.com. We will list your business name, address, phone number, hours and link to an online menu.

[CANCELLATIONS]

As things are rapidly changing, please check highland.in.gov for the latest Highland updates and cancellations.

Turn the page to learn more. >>

[COUNCIL MEETINGS]

Public participation in all meetings is curtailed. Town Council meetings – 2nd and 4th Mondays – will continue to stream live beginning at 6:30 p.m. Visit highland.in.gov and click the Watch | Live button.

[AGENDAS & MINUTES]

Download Highland Town Council agendas, meetings packets, minutes and memos from our document center by visiting highland.in.gov.



WARD 1

BERNIE ZEMEN
bzemen@comcast.net
(219) 781-1056



WARD 2

MARK HERAK
mherak@highland.in.gov
(219) 838-0126



WARD 3

MARK SCHOCKE
mschocke@highland.in.gov
(219) 207-2075



WARD 4

TOM BLACK
tblack@highland.in.gov
(219) 301.2077



WARD 5

ROGER SHEEMAN
rsheeman@highland.in.gov
(630) 673-3363



CLERK-TREASURER

MICHAEL GRIFFIN
mgriffin@highland.in.gov
(219) 838-1080

NEWS TIP? STORY IDEA?

Send your suggestions to:
gazeboexpress@theideafactory.us.com

The Gazebo Express is produced by:
The Idea Factory • (219) 779-9041
www.theideafactory.us.com

Printed by Lithographic Communications
9701 Indiana Parkway, Munster, IN 46321

Stand up and be counted!

Highland's 2020 Census Complete Count Committee is urging all individuals to turn to the Internet to complete their census form.

The first mailing from the U.S. Census Bureau arrived in mid-March with an invitation and personalized code to respond to the census. With or without this code, residents can respond online by going to my2020census.gov.

Households that do not respond will receive a written questionnaire in mid-April with the option to complete the form online, by mail or phone. Self-response eliminates the need for an in-person visit by census personnel in May.

"An accurate, complete count of Highland residents will ensure the town receives its fair share of the estimated \$675 billion in government funding distributed annually based on census data," said Lance Ryskamp, co-chair of Highland's Complete Count Committee.



[INFORMATION]

To find out more about Highland's efforts and Census-related updates, follow the Highland Complete Count Committee on social media:

- ✓ Facebook: Highland IN 2020 Census
- ✓ Twitter: @HighlandCensus
- ✓ Instagram: @highlandcensus2020

INFO: Email the Complete Count Committee at lryskamp@highland.in.gov.

Help shape Highland's future ... take our Parks & Recreation survey

Imagine what could be next for Highland's recreational spaces – our 22 parks, bike paths and Lincoln Community Center.

Highland Parks and Recreation wants to hear your vision as Superintendent Alex Brown and the Park Board take steps to update the Five-Year Master Plan.

"This survey was specifically created to gather information from residents to learn more about their recreational interests and provide a venue to express opinions about programs, activities and quality," Brown said. "Fiscal responsibility and efficiency through proper planning are very important to us.

"I want to thank you for helping to shape a vision for the future."



[SURVEY INFO]

Parks and Recreation's survey creates a snapshot of the community to 2025 and beyond. Let your voice be heard. Link to the online survey at highlandparks.org and click on the survey.

Deadline is May 1.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND TOWN

[PAYING YOUR UTILITY BILL]



Highland will not impose late fees on utility bills or shut off water during the crisis.

Waivers will continue for 60 days starting April 1, including all bills incurred/accrued on that day. Residents are urged to use the drop box or mail slot at Town Hall or pay online at highland.in.gov. If you have special needs, call (219) 972-7589 or (219) 838-1080.

[POLICE DEPARTMENT]



With access to the police department suspended as part of the coronavirus directive to shelter in place, Police Chief Pete Hojnicky said residents should report non-emergency incidents – lost wallets, cell phones or stolen license plates – by calling (219) 660-0001. A dispatcher will ask a series of questions that will be followed by an officer calling to take a report. Please use 911 for emergencies only.

[FIRE DEPARTMENT]



The Highland Fire Department continues to provide 24-hour service to residents. Coronavirus has not changed that. “We continue to do our work. When people have fire or medical emergencies, we want them to call 911, just like they always have,” Fire Chief Bill Timmer said. “Our stations are closed to the public for now. We need to reduce the chances our firefighters are exposed to COVID-19. This is meant to protect all of us to respond to your emergency – and all those that follow.”

[REDEVELOPMENT]



Highland Redevelopment Department staffing may be limited during the shelter-in-place order. Please call (219) 972-7598 if you have questions or business concerns. We'll respond as quickly as possible. Check our Facebook page for postings. Business in need? Visit sba.gov for low-interest loan information. Stay healthy!



[PARKS & RECREATION]



While Lincoln Community Center and public playgrounds remain closed, Parks Superintendent Alex Brown is encouraging healthy residents to practice safe social distancing and take to the town's parks and trails. As it turns out, it does a brain – and body – good. “The Centers for Disease Control and National Recreation and Park Association are urging people to connect with the outdoors,” he said. “Reap the mental and physical benefits these spaces provide. Safe use guidelines can be found at highlandparks.org.”

[BUILDING & INSPECTION]



The Building Department traditionally ramps up in spring with home improvement. What will be different this year is how we manage building and inspections to keep residents and staff safe. Visit highland.in.gov to download permits and forms, which can be mailed to: Highland Buildings & Inspection, 3333 Ridge Road, Highland, IN 46322.

[HIGHLAND PUBLIC WORKS]



Highland Public Works is splitting its workforce into morning and afternoon crews during the coronavirus pandemic. Assistant Director Mark Knesek said the move makes it less likely there will be any disruption in services or road and utility repairs as a result of widespread illness within the department. **Please note:** Saturday drop-off of large, unwanted items has been eliminated until further notice. Check highland.in.gov for updates.

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FOR HIGHLAND FAMILIES

[NORTH TOWNSHIP ASSISTANCE]

New processes have been put in place to remotely assist North Township residents who need help paying their mortgage, rent, utilities and burials during the pandemic. Food vouchers are currently unavailable. Case managers are conducting assistance interviews by phone. Highland residents should call (219) 932-2530. Before calling, you will need a few documents handy, including:

- Food Stamps/AFDC Program Verification
- Receipts or landlord statement that prove residency and its associated costs
- Last four pay stubs, strike verification, unemployment card, proof of child support, Social Security check or TANF/AFDC letter
- Proof of family size you are claiming
- Medical expense records
- Asset list
- Last month's expense sheet with credit cards, utilities, loans and cable listed.

Although documents will not be required during the crisis, those who receive assistance will be asked to provide copies of documents in the weeks to come.

"I encourage everyone who is requesting assistance to contact North Township's hardworking case managers first," North Township Trustee Frank J. Mrvan said. "These individuals are working every minute of their day helping North Township residents.

INFO: If you have an urgent need and are unable to get in touch with a North Township case manager, call Mrvan directly at (219) 746-5792 or Chief of Staff Lori Polgar at (219) 313-3930.

[MEALS ON WHEELS]

Meals on Wheels of Northwest Indiana continues to make every effort to ensure clients are taken care of during this pandemic and does not anticipate interruption to its current home delivered meals.

INFO: Call (219) 756-3663 or visit mownwi.org for more information and updates.



[CATHOLIC CHARITIES FOOD PANTRY]

North Township Trustee Frank J. Mrvan and the local Catholic Charities Food Pantry are working to provide food deliveries to seniors and the disabled community. **INFO:** Call (219) 306-1344. The goal is same-day delivery and maximum response within 24 hours. Deliveries will be completed before 6 p.m. Monday through Friday.

[FOOD BANK OF NORTHWEST INDIANA]

St. James the Less Catholic Church distributes food from 9 to 11 a.m. every Friday at 9640 Kennedy Ave. As long as pandemic precautions remain in effect, the distribution is a drive-through operation. Proof of Highland residency is required. A majority of the food at the St. James pantry comes from the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana and local merchants.

Allyson Vaulx, director of development for the food bank, said the agency serves as a clearing house, disseminating food to 111 local pantries. "With the sudden loss of employment for those who work in hard-hit sectors, such as the hospitality and casino industries, the food bank is working to create pop-up food pantries and mobile markets to keep people fed."

INFO: Visit foodbanknwi.org to learn more.

[CALLING ALL HELPERS]

If you are a church or organization that's providing assistance during the pandemic, we want to hear from you. Please email webupdates@theideafactory.us.com.